

Egyptian society. This ongoing debate, including the call for reform produced at the meeting of Arab civil society held at the Library of Alexandria last March, as well as the speech given by President Mubarak in the opening of that meeting reaffirming his commitment for a continuing reform process, provide for a constructive foundation for further efforts toward democracy and development.

Egyptian-American cooperation will also continue to encompass many other areas. Iraq faces a critical moment in its history, with wide implications across the region. We are committed to helping the Iraqi people realize their aspirations to build a sovereign, prosperous, stable, unified, and peaceful modern nation.

We intend to maintain our close cooperation in the fight against terrorism. Our two nations are among those who have suffered the most from the scourge and have no intention to relent in this fight. The United States expresses its appreciation for Egypt's

invaluable help and its readiness to continue its contributions towards combating and eliminating terrorism.

Since the 1970s, the United States has been Egypt's leading partner in economic, political, and social reform efforts, providing highly appreciated material and moral support. The two nations look forward to strengthening their partnership in this respect for the benefit of the people of both countries and region as a whole.

The Egyptian-American partnership has promoted peace and stability, while supporting positive change in the Middle East, for thirty years. We are confident that it is equally capable of meeting the challenges of the next thirty years and beyond. We look forward to an intensified dialogue about Egyptian-American cooperation and partnership in the 21st century.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

Statement on Signing Legislation To Provide for the Conveyance to the Utrok Atoll Local Government of a Decommissioned National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Ship *April 13, 2004*

Today, I have signed into law H.R. 2584, a bill to provide for the conveyance to the Utrok Atoll local government of a decommissioned National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration ship, and for other purposes.

Section 101(c) of the bill purports to require the Utrok Atoll local government, in consultation with the Government of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, to submit a plan to four committees of the United States Congress for the use of the ship to be conveyed. The Republic of the Marshall Islands, of which Utrok is a political subdivision, is a self-governing republic with a sovereign right to self-determination

whose government has the capacity to conduct foreign affairs. Accordingly, in light of the status of the Republic of the Marshall Islands and the exclusive authority of the President with respect to the conduct of the foreign affairs of the United States, the executive branch shall construe section 101(c) as asking the President to request, rather than as requiring, that the Utrok political subdivision submit a plan for use of the ship to be conveyed. The Secretary of State, after consultation with the Secretary of Commerce, shall communicate on my behalf as appropriate with the Government of the Republic of the Marshall Islands to

effectuate to the extent permissible the purposes of section 101.

GEORGE W. BUSH

The White House,

April 13, 2004.

NOTE: H.R. 2584, approved April 13, was assigned Public Law No. 108–219.

The President's News Conference *April 13, 2004*

The President. Good evening. Before I take your questions, let me speak with the American people about the situation in Iraq.

This has been tough weeks in that country. Coalition forces have encountered serious violence in some areas of Iraq. Our military commanders report that this violence is being instigated by three groups: Some remnants of Saddam Hussein's regime, along with Islamic militants, have attacked coalition forces in the city of Fallujah; terrorists from other countries have infiltrated Iraq to incite and organize attacks; in the south of Iraq, coalition forces face riots and attacks that are being incited by a radical cleric named Al Sadr. He has assembled some of his supporters into an illegal militia and publicly supported the terrorist groups Hamas and Hezbollah. Al Sadr's methods of violence and intimidation are widely repudiated by other Iraqi Shi'a. He's been indicted by Iraqi authorities for the murder of a prominent Shi'a cleric.

Although these instigations of violence come from different factions, they share common goals. They want to run us out of Iraq and destroy the democratic hopes of the Iraqi people. The violence we have seen is a power grab by these extreme and ruthless elements. It's not a civil war. It's not a popular uprising.

Most of Iraq is relatively stable. Most Iraqis, by far, reject violence and oppose dictatorship. In forums where Iraqis have met to discuss their political future and in all the proceedings of the Iraqi Governing

Council, Iraqis have expressed clear commitments. They want strong protections for individual rights. They want their independence, and they want their freedom.

America's commitment to freedom in Iraq is consistent with our ideals and required by our interests. Iraq will either be a peaceful, democratic country, or it will again be a source of violence, a haven for terror, and a threat to America and to the world. By helping to secure a free Iraq, Americans serving in that country are protecting their fellow citizens. Our Nation is grateful to them all and to their families that face hardship and long separation.

This weekend, at a Fort Hood hospital, I presented a Purple Heart to some of our wounded, had the honor of thanking them on behalf of all Americans. Other men and women have paid an even greater cost. Our Nation honors the memory of those who have been killed, and we pray that their families will find God's comfort in the midst of their grief. As I have said to those who have lost loved ones, we will finish the work of the fallen.

America's Armed Forces are performing brilliantly, with all the skill and honor we expect of them. We're constantly reviewing their needs. Troop strength, now and in the future, is determined by the situation on the ground. If additional forces are needed, I will send them. If additional resources are needed, we will provide them. The people of our country are united behind our men and women in uniform, and